

# ***Pick up the Poop and Protect Graftons Ponds, Lakes, Rivers, Brooks and Community Health.***

Why do you have to pick up after your dog? Won't it just degrade and wash away? Can't you just push it into the storm drain?

It is critical that you pick up and properly dispose of your pet's waste in the trash, toilet (without the bag), at pet waste disposal stations if available or by burying it (at least 6-inches deep and away from gardens). Pet waste is a serious problem for our health and our waters. If pet waste is left on the sidewalk, the street, the lawn or placed in a catch basin, it washes into the nearest water body, either directly or through storm drains. In Grafton that means directly into Cider Mill, Fisherville, Flint, Hayes, Hovey, Pratts and Windle Ponds, or to Silver Lake, Lake Ripples, the Blackstone River, Quinsigamond River or into all our local brooks, streams and wetlands.

Contrary to what some people think, water that goes down the storm drain does not enter a sewer treatment plant. With every rainfall, anything left on the lawn, street or in the storm drain goes out to the waterbodies. Pet waste that is left out during the winter will stay frozen until it all melts and creates quite a mess and health hazard during the spring thaw.

Some of the problems that occur when pet waste is not picked up include the following:

1. Pet waste contains bacteria that can cause diseases in humans and threaten wildlife.
2. Pets, children, and adults who swim in local waters, play outside or garden are at risk for infection from bacteria found in pet waste, with children having the highest risk.
3. Flies may spread diseases when stopping on waste and then onto uncovered food.
4. Diseases or parasites that can be carried from pet waste to humans include the following:
  - a. *Campylobacteriosis* - a bacterial infection carried by dogs and cats that cause diarrhea in humans.
  - b. *Cryptosporidium* – a protozoan parasite that can cause diarrhea, stomach cramps, nausea and dehydration. May be fatal to people with insufficient immune systems.
  - c. *Toxocariasis* – roundworms transmitted from dogs to humans, often without symptoms, but can cause vision loss, rash, fever or cough.
  - d. *Toxoplasmosis* – a protozoan parasite carried by cats that can cause birth defects such as blindness and mental retardation if a pregnant woman becomes infected. Also a problem for persons with depressed immune systems. Can cause headaches, muscle aches and lymph node enlargement.
5. Nutrients in pet waste can cause algae and weed growth in lakes and rivers and ponds. Water may become cloudy and green and unattractive for boating, swimming or fishing.
6. As waste decays in water it uses up the oxygen in the water threatening aquatic life and also releasing ammonia. Low oxygen levels combined with ammonia in warmer temperatures can cause fish kills.

Information Sources include [EPA website](#) and [various states stormwater websites and articles](#).